FOR A LASTING SOLUTION

BY

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40 C, RIDGE ROAD, BOMBAY.

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The present lull in the controversy over the bilingual Bombay State furnishes an opportunity for serious and dispassionate reflection. If the lull is interpreted as the end of the controversy, the consequences may well be grave. The nine articles that follow were written at different times from November 1955 to May 1957. They are presented together in the hope that right thinking may be assisted and right conclusions reached.

15-10-1957. A. D. GORWALA.

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SETTLEMENT WITHOUT BITTERNESS

24-11-1955

The States Reorganisation Commission had before it the reports of the Dar Commission and the Jawaharlal-Vallabhbhai-Pattabhi Committee, which came to the conclusion that in the event of the disintegration of Bombay State, the city of Bombay should be constituted into a separate unit. It says it heard a great volume of opinion which supported this view. Yet it came to a contrary conclusion. So great would be the difficulties, it held, a separate Bombay City State would have to face, that it could not, despite the high authority and great names of those in favour, recommend this solution.

Yet when the composite state proposed by the Commission proved not acceptable to the Maharashtrians, unless Vidharba was added to it, and to the Gujaratis if Vidharba was added to it, the Congress Working Committee fell back, without overmuch consideration on, what seemed to it, this easy answer.

A separate Bombay City, a separate Gujarat, a separate Maharashtra including Vidharba ! And so content were they with this seemingly Solomonlike judgment, that their President went further and assured the Maharashtrians, both inside and outside the city, that if five years hence the city legislature wanted by a majority to join Maharashtra, it would be fully entitled to do so.

If the decision is maintained, misfortune and tension must dog the city of Bombay for the next five years. Consider the likely development of the situation. Marathi speakers in the city, 43.6 per cent of the population, will be bitter, and with justification, for on no reasonable grounds at all, but merely because of vague apprehensions and fears which the Commission has not even named, enunciated or discussed in detail, this vital centre is being cut off from the area which bounds it on three sides, the sea being the fourth. Within the city, Gujarati-Marathi tension will rise steeply.

There will be constant complaints of discrimination, sabotage, unfair treatment on all sides. Feeling against Gujarati economic interests will grow and may even crystallise into an attitude of hostility towards Gujaratis in particular and well-to-do people in general.

This situation offers a splendid opportunity for the Communists and it would be foolish to suppose that they will not make the most of it. With the limitations placed upon the operation of the Congress Party in this matter because of the Working Committee's order, the Communist Party must gain. Within a year or two, the bulk of the middle class Marathi vote will be near-Communist. There will be a similar trend in the working class. As all parties to the left of Congress have declared themselves in favour of Bombay City within Maharashtra, a swing to the left for speakers of Marathi is inevitable. But the only party which is in a position really to profit from the swing is the Communist. The economic interests, Gujarati and others, that want a separate Bombay City, can scarcely want this. They had better think again.

Consider too the likely development in Maharashtra. The political results would seem to be obvious. A very considerable part of the energy of the politically conscious will be directed into political and economic campaigning to bring about the merger of Bombay City and all policies will be strongly influenced by the fact of the separation of Bombay. A most undesirable distortion will in effect have been given to the whole trend of political life, affecting detrimentally the chances of progress in the right directions. Feeling against Gujaratis will be intensified and the Communists will make considerable headway here too, both among the middle and working classes, for undeterred by any other considerations, they will leap forward to take the leadership in the task of making untenable the position of a separate Bombay City State.

Do the economic interests, Gujarati and others, that so impressed the Commission with their apprehensions, want this result ? Can economic interests throughout the country, or indeed, any interest sincerely concerned with the welfare or the nation as a whole, wish to bring about a situation in which a large, powerful and virile State like Maharashtra is very likely to fall into the clutches of the Communists? Let us all understand, even the most complacent among us, that facts have a way of asserting and realising themselves and that as there is little defence against them once that happens, it is best to recognise them and meet their demands in time.

What then does wisdom dictate in the present circumstances? A solution with good will and a quick solution, for the sands are already beginning to run out. The arrest of five hundred outside the Assembly building is an indication of the kind of situation no well-wisher of his country can wish to see prolonged. Said the States Reorganisation Committee: "Another point to bear in mind is that Greater Bombay now depends for power and water supplies, no less than for its further expansion, on the Maharashtrian areas. The natural links of the city with its hinterland in Maharashtra are, therefore, another argument for not constituting Greater Bombay into a separate administration."

The people of Bombay City, the people really concerned and likely to suffer most from the present tensions, must take a hand, not leaving their destiny to politicians and economic interests. They must arrnge matters by consent of both parties. Bombay City cannot be separated from Maharshtra. It is an integral part of it and must remain with it. But the Maharashtrians must recognise its special position. Arrangements can be made for the grant of larger power to the corporation and the setting up of a metropolitan authority. A convention to recognise the importance of city interests can be established. Any further safeguards that can be devised within the Constitution can be considered.

"Settlement without bitterness" should be the watchword of all citizens of Bombay and of the new Maharashtra State. If this comes about, both will be strengthened, the people of Bombay by the fair probability of a permanent safeguarding of their interests and a good opportunity of playing a really influential part in the political and economic life of Maharashtra, the people of Maharashtra by having obtained this great accession without ill-will and in a statesmanlike manner.

PROGRAMME FOR PEACEFUL ACTION

29-12-1955

The long debate on the States Reorganisation Commission's Report that ended last week showed that whatever else might or might not happen, Bombay was not going to be included within Maharashtra. Clearly, then, the Maharashtrians have a genuine and serious grievance. The grievance is not merely against their co-partners in the existing Bombay State. It is quite as much, if not even more, against the people of India, for the representatives of the people constituting the Government refuse to accept their thoroughly justifiable plea.

What must they do next? It is important that they should remember that they are democrats and constitutionalists. All the more because of the vague allegations against them, the general fears expressed, must they do nothing that savours of violence or force, whatever the strength of their feelings. Democratically and vigorously must they draw attention to the injustice done to them. Democratically and vigorously must they seek to get it redressed. This they can only do by making the injustice impinge with a shock upon the mind of India. They must make it apparent that to them this is a very serious business and that India must also realise that for it too, this is going to be a very serious business.

The first step is the perfectly constitutional one of resignation of representatives from all ministerships and legislative bodies. When a long and arduous parliamentary campaign is to be launched, it is well that those who are to wage it should have behind them the fresh mandate of the people whose representatives they are. Having resigned, the sitting members will naturally stand again for their seats in the re-elections which must take place as soon as possible, and within two months generally. Presumably, there will be no opposition to those resigning on so fundamental an issue. If, in some places, there is, presumably the Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad will have influence enough to persuade the opponents to stand down. In any case, almost all the members will be returned.

They must then settle down within the legislatures to positive, determined, democratic obstruction. Taking the fullest advantage of the rules and the procedure they must see that, as far as possible, no business gets done at all. Their questions must be many, their supplementaries detailed, their contributions to debates at as great length as possible. Whenever they can find an opportunity of throwing out a measure, they must do so. They must make it clear that if they are to be treated in this fashion, so far as they are concerned, the legislative work of Government will just not proceed. On every occasion, they must try and bring in the relevance of the Maharashtra issue. Their success in the State Legislature will of course be much greater than in the Central, because of their fewer numbers in the latter, but even in that venue, determined and capable men concentrating on one point, though in a minority, will soon be able to make their presence felt most effectively. They can become the real news on the legislative front and get the whole of India Maharashtra grievance conscious in a very special way.

Outside the legislatures, too, there is a wide field for legitimate democratic persuasion. Batches of three or four men and women of standing might call two or three times a week on Central and Bombay State Ministers and discuss the issue with them in the friendliest possible manner. Similar discussions might also continue with the President and all individual members of the Bombay Citizen's Committee. It will indeed be strange if after such continued persuasion and discussion over two or three months, a meeting of minds does not seem very close. Perfectly peaceful processions and meetings at various localities two or three times a week would of course be in order, great care being taken to see that all violence is eschewed. It might also be proper to send a thousand Maharashtrians to Delhi, to hold meetings outside Parliament, in Connaught Circus, at the doors of the Prime Minister's and Home Minister's houses, the speeches being in Hindi, so that Delhi residents and visitors would have no difficulty in understanding them. Members of the States Reorganisation Commission might also be interviewed several times a week with a view to getting them to change their minds and issue statements saying they had done so after full and further consideration.

Should action within the legislatures and outside on these lines prove unfruitful even after the prolonged trial of some months, the time would be ripe for resort to civil disobedience on a mass scale. It must be remembered that even so thorough a liberal as Mr. Gokhale held civil disobedience to be a perfectly constitutional protest, so that no objection could be urged to it, if it was undertaken after every other legitimate method had been tried. Quite clearly, a programme of this nature demands much greater grit, will power and ability than the making of wild speeches and the taking of wilder action. There should be no lack in Maharashtra of the qualities needed, and the results, involving as they will no bitterness in the attainment, are bound to be sweeter and more lasting. The Mauryas had a saying " Finance is the key to all action ; accordingly take the best care of the Treasury." For such a cause, the Parishad presumably will have no difficulty in obtaining small contributions from a very large number of people.

UNDERSTANDING, JUSTICE, FORBEARANCE

24-1-1956

What a week this has been ! A week of humiliation and disgrace, of shame and grief ! Almost it seems as if our pride has brought retribution. The Lord has hardened his face against us and the hand of his wrath is heavy upon us. From Bombay and other large centres of population, from near and afar, are received reports indicating failure to come within even measurable distance of the Indian ideal. Strife and hatred, ineptitude and lack of vision are their keynotes. Nor does the end of such conditions seem in sight.

The thinking citizen can scarcely help asking " Is this the feeling that holds this country together, this the spirit that is supposed to make all citizens joint creators and partners in the great society that is the nation ? " The tenuous nature of the tie has indeed begun to become evident. Indian nationhood, in its modern form largely a product of foreign rule and English education, obviously demands a great deal of wise and painstaking nurture. It cannot be taken for granted.

Understanding, justice, forbearance, above all these must be forthcoming in ample measure. The higher the position in the Government or in the political life of the country, the greater the need for the presence in the individual of these qualities. Indignant condemnation has as of right a place in the art of Government, yet who can doubt that in the circumstances of the present time, the larger interests of statesmanship must make that place secondary ?

Departing from its normal nature, Bombay City has been the worst storm-centre in the country this week. Much has been done here that is thoroughly disgraceful. Citizen has persecuted citizen, neighbour has turned against neighbour. The forces of law and order have been hard at work and have still much to do before peaceful conditions can be restored. It is of course elementary that all necessary action for this purpose must be taken. But in the taking of this action, the three qualities mentioned, understanding, justice, forbearance must also come continuously into play.

Here no question of retaliation can arise. Even the punishments and sacrifices the State is compelled to impose on the wrongdoer caught at the scene of the wrong must be imposed in the manner and with the restraint of the priest, not with the harshness and abandon of the butcher. When, moreover, extraordinary measures have to become the normal course of conduct, every precaution laid down by the law or regulations must be carefully observed. Thus alone can punishment remain punishment and not become revenge. Thus alone can the growth of deep bitterness be avoided.

On the need for the avoidance of this growth, it is hardly necessary to argue. Of all attitudes, bitterness is the last that should exist between the people and the Government. It must be recognised that however wrong-headed sections of the people are at particular times, however necessary it is to take action against them then, by and large they will always be there, and Governments will have to work with them.

The less their memories, by no means short, are filled with bitterness against Government, the more the likelihood of successful co-operation.

Understanding, justice, forbearance, have however, to be applied, beyond the incidents, to the reasons that lead to them. In the Bombay case, the real reason is the deep Maharashtrian feeling that the exclusion of Bombay City from Maharashtra is not only unjust, but a special insult to the Maharastrians. This feeling is shared by almost all the Marathi-speaking people. The Communists have undoubtedly, following their usual practice, fished in troubled waters, but the waters were definitely troubled even without their intervention.

The Congress political leadership in Maharashtra has moreover been extremely feeble. The people, angry and annoyed, have not had from it the guidance they had a right to expect. Though it has been clear for some time that the decision on Bombay City would go against the Maharashtrians the leadership not only worked out no plan for constitutional action to try and get the decision changed, but did not even, immediately on the announcement create sufficient confidence in its ability to work out such a plan.

The people, frustrated and indignant, rushed out to act. They acted as do crowds throughout the world who wish to register protest against authority. They refrained from work, they set out to compel others not to work, to prevent them travelling, to cause damage to State property and injury to all and sundry, especially to members of the community, the leaders of which they felt had been responsible for the decision that had caused their claim to fail. Thoroughly deplorable conduct, undoubtedly, conduct which could not be allowed to continue unchecked and must be suppressed, but still understandable conduct in the circumstances.

As civil disturbances get prolonged, a certain amount of brutalisation begins to appear. The law-breakers by habit and profession, the bandits, murderers and looters get ample opportunity. They begin to acquire the prestige of champions and they act according to their tendencies. Soon, too, they have imitators. Hence the cruel and heart-breaking incidents that shame and degrade human nature.

Dealing with disturbances of this kind is a difficult enough problem, but it is a problem of the fringe. The central task for any Government faced with a disturbed situation due in large part to profound popular feeling is so to mitigate the feeling that the disturbance disappears. It may find it impossible to concede everything that is asked for, yet it must be prepared to re-examine honestly and reconsider fairly.

The popular mind must find its grievance dissipated. The Government must not seem rigid and adamant. Its decisions must be so arranged and publicised that deep indignation has to give way to confidence. A sullen three-crore, minus at the most a few hundred thousand, Maharashtrians can evidently be no source of strength and may become cause of great weakness. Reconciliation must clearly be a not insignificant part of policy. Otherwise, with a determined people, disturbances, however often suppressed, can hardly ever be relied upon to cease. With each recurrence and each spreading, the bitterness too will grow. Nor need it be thought that citizen peace armies can do anything to make a real difference.

The first onset should be enough to convince the many experts in the art of the possible, who no doubt constitute the High Command of the Congress Party, that a Centrally-administered Bombay City State will just not do. They and the Government must think seriously again. If the aim is genuine peace, the desire, fostering rather than discouragement of the sense of true nationhood, their thinking must be animated not so much by political expediency or personal predeliction as by understanding, forbearance and justice.

FACTS AND DANGERS

25-1-1956

Says the Congress Working Committee's resolution on reactions in the country to the Working Committee's decisions on the reorganization of States: "It should be clearly understood that there can be no surrender to violence and methods of terrorism." Very sound indeed! Yet it should also be clearly understood that in vital matters like the reorganization of States violence may have its origin not in any inherent viciousness, but in the frustration of strong claims sincerely held by large populations to be completely justified. Violence is undoubtedly bad and must be unequivocally condemned. But non-recognition of facts is by no means good and should be promptly corrected.

Bombay City, a pinpoint in the surrounding land mass, is, according to the Working Committee and the Central Government's decisions, to be separated from that mass and administered directly by the Centre. The writ of the future Government of Maharashtra, one of the two States into which, with additions from outside, the present State of Bombay is to be divided, the other being Mahagujrat, is not to run in it. Why this should be so has never been clearly stated. The States Reorganization Commission hinted vaguely at doubts and apprehensions felt by some non-Marathi speaking people in Bombay and therefore suggested that the City of Bombay should continue as a bilingual Marathi-cum-Gujerati unit. The Government of India has also not been particularly specific in the giving of reasons. The great importance of Bombay, commercially and politically, its cosmopolitan nature, etc., have been held to be sufficient answer to the 43% of the people of Bombay who are Marathi-speaking and to those of the whole of Maharashtra, for not letting the city form a part and be the capital of what would normally have been its State.

A Citizens' Committee consisting of some individuals, prominent commercially and socially, had appeared before the State Reorganization Commission to oppose the inclusion of Bombay in Maharashtra. What its representatives or any other witnesses said has never been stated nor was the Maharashtrian side given an opportunity of answering any allegations if they were made. The Reorganization Commission itself had emphasized the undesirability of making Bombay City a separate administrative unit. Yet the Working Committee after, as it says, protracted discussions decided on a Bombay directly under the Centre. This left no room for further argument. Had a City State with an elected Legislature as an independent unit of the federation been proposed, the Maharashtrians might still have had hopes that by persuasion and pressing their case, they would be able to induce the majority of the Legislature to agree to merge with Maharashtra. But with Central control all hope of persuasion through the people had to be abandoned. Action alone it was felt might perhaps be helpful.

The Maharashtrian leaders of the Congress Party, although they must have had a very fair idea of what the Working Committee's decision was likely to be, had no plan of action worked out. They could not announce forthwith a programme for constitutional protest. The Marathi-speaking people were not only dejected but they also felt deeply insulted. In the result, accepting to some extent the guidance of the Communists, ever anxious to exploit grievances, quite a number of them vented their fury in severe rioting, stoppage of work, damage to public property, injury to peaceful citizens, looting of shops—briefly, in making civilized life impossible over large sections of the city. The Police, most of them Maharashtrians, did their duty with rare devotion and after six days of intermittent firing, loss of life and injury to person, a kind of peace has been restored. Yet so intense was the deep feeling behind the violent action and so complete its success that for at least four days as well organized a service as the Postal could not get mail from the General Post Office, situated outside the riot-infested area, to the Malabar Hill Post Office, again outside the riot area, through routes lying along the fringe of the city, completely free from all danger of rioting.

What of the future? In the city there are about 1,700,000 Maharashtrians. Except for at most a 100,000, if that, all would be desirous of a merger with Maharashtra. Many of them, industrial labourers and the like are exceedingly tough individuals. Among the 30,000,000 Maharashtrians outside the city too, very few are not determined that Bombay shall be included in Maharashtra. Political leadership, both within and outside the city, will either have to give concrete form to this aspiration or give place to another that will.

As time passes, if the Congress cannot be of assistance in this matter, it will fall more and more into disrepute, power passing to the Communists whose violence can be relied upon to assuage feeling even if it cannot bring immediate results. The city, moreover, is extremely vulnerable. It depends for its water and its power entirely on Maharashtra. Its lines of communication, railways and roads, run through Maharashtra. A large part of its labour force, its supplies of foodgrain and vegetables, have to come from or through Maharashtra. Obviously, even small bands of determined men can, despite much vigilance and guarding, cause at the least very serious inconvenience. With a hostile Maharashtra, even a sullenly passive and not actively opposed Maharashtra, life in centrally administered Bombay could undoubtedly be made intensely miserable.

The future situation in Maharashtra, too, merits careful thought. A virile people, strong, intelligent, and proud, can be led but cannot be driven. A deep sense of injustice is about the worst disqualification for democratic, social or economic progress. However beneficial or profitable the schemes of the Government of India, they are scarcely likely to receive much attention in a Maharashtra obsessed with its grievence over Bombay. The next five years may easily be devoted by its people almost entirely to attempting to get it remedied, to the great detriment both of the State and of India as a whole. It may even happen that the new State may prefer not to form a govenment at all, leaving it to the Centre to administer it too directly, if it can face the consequences.

The present mood of the Maharashtrians is not likely to be short-lived. Scholars and poets, no less than business men and labourers, are acutely affected. Said one the other day: " I don't think there is any one of us who will not be prepared to go almost to the limit in this matter." The Congress Working Committee's decision has been characterized as irrevocable. In all the circumstances, that is scarcely a wise term to use.

SHORT-CUT TO FANTASY

7-2-1956

Clutching at straws, the only apt description of the sudden attachment of the Congress Party to the idea of large regional administrative areas formed by the merger of two or more existing States, advances neither the public cause nor Government dignity. The leading men of the Congress Working Committee seem to think that the only way to overcome the heat of the powerful fire kindled by linguistic emotion against the reorganisation decisions of Government is to jump into the ocean of large zonal provinces. They fail to see that to react from one extreme to the other is no answer, that the water has its own peculiar dangers at least as detrimental to the public interest as the flame which it is sought to quench by leaping into it. Difficult problems are best solved by facing up to them, not by endeavouring to create diversions in the hope that thereby they may be forgotten. Solutions based upon escapism, even if successful for a short while, cannot last.

The idea of zones is no new discovery. It is merely a refurbishing of Coupland's regionalism. In order to make federation acceptable to the Muslims and the Indian States, the old India was to be divided into four areas, the Indus, Ganges, Delta and Deccan regions. Thus coupland hoped the political purpose would be served, though the regions were nothing like homogeneous either from the economic or the cultural point of view. The regions were to be the dominant political units but for the purposes of the country as a whole they were to have an agency Centre, the powers of which were to be restricted to foreign affairs and defence, currency and external trade or tariff policy. The regions were not to be amenable to the control of the Central Government. They would deal with all resources and possess all powers. Thus it was hoped that somehow conflicting interests would be reconciled, and with a weak centre and powerful provinces, the country would creak along. The suggestion was, at least in the conditions of the time, logical. Despite that, it would probably not have worked. Fortunately it was never tried.

Conditions today are of course very different. According to the Indian Constitution, the Centre has extensive powers and is the dominant political structure, both the functions and powers of the States being concerned largely with domestic and local matters. In the circumstances regionalism can serve no purpose at all. Nor indeed is there in existence one overshadowing conflict of interest, like the Hindu-Muslim, in which, by dividing the country into regions, some kind of balance may be attained.

The historical process in India during the last century has worked on the whole towards the formation of smaller units of provincial administration out of larger ones, the main considerations for division being administrative convenience and economic and cultural homogeneity. Even under the highly centralised system of paternal Government of the British, at least two provinces, Orissa and Sind, were formed on the basis of language. Since Independence, another such, Andhra, has been brought into being. So powerful in fact has been the attraction of this criterion, that except for two special cases all the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission, however disguised the language in which they are couched, are really based upon it. Because of the extremely ugly and disgraceful incidents that have in recent weeks been allowed to disfigure the face of India, through regionalism it is sought to reverse once and for all this trend. The totally incompatible husband and wife, longing to be rid of one another, regionalism will compulsorily keep together by insisting that they merge the separate house they are living in with the next block of flats, full of strangers they do not know.

The belief is that arrangements of this nature will, in some strange way, make for and strengthen the unity of India. Fissiparous tendencies will be eradicated if all citizens belong to one of four or five sub-divisions rather than to one of sixteen or eighteen. In fact, of course, if the four or five units work and develop the unit consciousness they are supposed to, the result may well turn out contrary to expectation. One or more of four large and powerful regions are much more likely to want to challenge the control of the centre and to shake off its power than one or more of sixteen comparatively small and weak units. It is not difficult to imagine ambitious and able politicians in charge of a well established region wishing to play a role of their own to the detriment of the centre in international and foreign affairs. The principal tension of the future moreover is probably likely to be between the South and the North. The bitter comment so commonly heard about the dominance of Uttar Pradesh in governmental circles is but an illustration of this feeling. Only those lacking in vision or desirous of giving fissiparous tendencies opportunity for action would go out of their way to promote and support the creation of one strong region of the South.

There is no reason to hold that heterogeneous regional units are likely to conduce to the advantage of their inhabitants more than comparatively homogeneous smaller States. Administration in them will undoubtedly become more exacting and its tasks will be performed less efficiently. Diversity of language within a region can scarcely be considered a factor making for progress. The old conflicts will not be solved by an automatic coupling together. On the contrary new conflicts are likely to be added to their number. If, in fact, the first flush of enthusiasm induces arrangements of this nature, the glow will soon disappear, and the energies of those whom unreason has joined together will be dissipated for many years to come in trying to tear as under the unnatural tie. It is not indeed as if there were no experience on this matter to guide us. Many of these areas were in the past yoked together and it was with a sense of great relief that at least the weaker among them shook off the joint yoke. To get them under similar yokes once again is neither service to them nor benefit to the country.

There are in fact only two reasonable alternatives in this matter. A unitary Central Government, without any States, governing the country, divided into small administrative units of a few districts each, directly through its agents, and a federal Central Government as the Government of a federation, with States by and large homogeneous in culture and language. Since the first would not be considered politically expedient by even the most extreme advocates of central authority, the second alone holds the field. The Congress Working Committee and the Central Government will, if wise, cease struggling vainly and, acknowledging this position, take appropriate action in each case of conflict, dealing with it firmly yet understandingly, abandoning the idea of fantastic short-cuts which can lead both the country and themselves only into the Slough of Despond.

RE-READING THE S. R. C. REPORT

15-5-1956

"What an opportunity missed! How unfortunate!" That must be the feeling of everyone whose occasions lead him to read again the States Reorganisation Commission's Report. Consider these circumstances. The constitution of the Commission—three mature public men of varied experience and undoubted ability, assisted by a specially selected and diligent secretariat; its scope—the whole country with every facility for enquiry, investigation and deliberation; its duration—a year and nine months; the result—a piece of work, undistinguished and flat. What could have been one of the great State papers of all time turns out to be a very mediocre document, one of the weakest presented to the Government of India since Independence. Grasp of principle, mastery of detail, skill of exposition, where were these, when the Commission was considering and recording its conclusions?

How did it happen that the result of the labour of such distinguished and able men was such a document? The health of the Chairman, it was rumoured at the time, was by no means particulary robust. Similar reports were also heard regarding Pandit Kunzru and the Secretary of the Commission. There is nothing so debilitating to proper consideration and correct judgment as ill-health, and its prevalence among the members and Secretary, if true, would account for some of the weakness of the Report. Yet the cause probably goes deeper than this. Politics rather than statesmanship seems to be the keynote of this work. The politician lives from day to day. The statesman turns often to the future. His eyes survey the distant view no less than the near. He accordingly is apt to pay more heed to principle than the politician who, even when acting in conformity with it, is generally uneasy, and has grave doubts about acknowledging that he is so acting.

No better example of this tendency could be found than the Commission's reluctance to admit that its proposals, except for two special cases, follow the single criterion of language. A glance at the list of reorganised units at the end of the Commission's discussion of its recommendations suffices to show that the general basis of division is language and nothing else. Yet the Commission argues strongly against the acceptance of this criterion, and in support of its theoretical view, as opposed to its actual practice, puts forth the frightening "home-land" concept, to scare off all good Indians who might continue to see merit in the formation of units on the basis of language. For, says the Commission, once language is admitted as the deciding factor, if the speaker of a particular language is domiciled outside the State speaking that language, his loyalty will be to that State and not to the State of his domicile.

But there would seem to be nothing too terrible in that. The apprehension is induced by the use of the word "loyalty." Bengalis living in Bombay or Tamils in Calcutta naturally have a special feeling for the States of their origin. Between that feeling and the feeling that makes them render their duty to Bombay or Calcutta as residents of these cities, there is no conflict nor need any arise. The Commission does not surely suggest that if a man from one State settles down in another, he must wipe out of his mind and heart all thought of, and affection for, the former. Generally speaking, retaining that affection, he develops a similar, often even a stronger, affection for the area of domicile. It may of course be that he is only a migrant, come to a city to earn his livelihood with his home and the idea of his home always in the place of his permanent abode, in which case his natural affection may well be stronger for that than for his temporary resting-place, though even then that will not make him incapable of being, or unwilling to be, a good citizen where he lives.

The confusion of ideas in the Commission's Report is evident. The general trend of the argument would seem to be towards persuading the ordinary man that if he holds language to be the really important factor in the formation of State units, *i.e.* the smaller areas that are the federating units within the larger area of the federation, India, he is in some subtle way being untrue to the idea of India itself. Now this is completely erroneous. It is true that the federation of India did not bring together units which were already sovereign before the formation of the federation. Nonetheless, the identity of federating units and their internal homogeneity are matters of the greatest importance, not only for the people of the units but for the federation itself.

Identity and homogeneity are both functions of language. Hence the significance of language and the linguistic unit. To decry this on the ground of its leading to failure in a larger loyalty is to misread the situation. The smaller loyalty, rightly interpreted, is easily comprised within the larger. It strengthens and fortifies it. Almost it can be said that he who does not have affection for his State, cannot, except in rare instances, be passionately devoted to his country. Home and country are kindred points to both of which men must be true, and large numbers of people find great difficulty in being true to what is not a home but a house full of strong pulls and diverse tensions, in other words, the bilingual State.

The Commission's Report was signed on 30th September 1955. On the 17th November 1955, Sardar Panikkar, one of the members of the Commission, delivered a lecture on the background of the problem of States Reorganisation to the United Services Institute at New Delhi. He there had no doubt that the linguistic principle was the correct one and adduced much solid argument in support of it. The views he expressed on that occasion about Bombay are also interesting: " We did not consider it desirable to establish Bombay as a separate City State. It had in our opinion to be a part of a larger territorial unit. Its incorporation in Maharashtra did not seem to us feasible because of various reasons. It would have in the first place led to a financial crisis with disastrous results to the country. So we had to evolve a scheme by which this problem could be solved and the suggestion that we made was that the Marathwada area of Hyderabad, Saurashtra and Kutch should be merged in the present State of Bombay. Under the scheme the Maharashtrians would have a clear majority of 20 seats in the legislature." He made no comment on the Commission's peculiar proposal to have a separate, extremely small Vidarbha State!

ANGER IN AHMEDABAD

11-10-1956

Deeply as it must be regretted that the Prime Minister of India should not receive a respectful hearing at any place within the country, there may perhaps be an element of good in the hostile reception accorded by the Ahmedabad students to Mr. Nehru. They refused to let him speak. He tried for ninety minutes, the time he had set aside for the meeting, then left, saying "To-day's experience is something new. I thank you for it. I shall remember it." If he was not speaking ironically, if he sincerely meant what he said, he may well have good cause to be grateful for this incident. As he reflects upon it seriously in the late watches of the night, when the minds of sensitive men consider in the intervals of sleep the happenings of the past day, he may realise its true significance.

On him it served clear notice. The youth of Ahmedabad and through it, of India, was saying to him "You are Nehru, the great leader. Your charm is indisputable, your prestige enormous. Like an Atlas, you sustain the Congress upon your shoulders. Your smile makes men and women happy. Your frown disconcerts them beyond measure. Yet remember, you can't just get away with everything. When you make such a mess as you have over the Bombay State Reorganisation, neither shall your charm fascinate us nor your prestige overawe us. In spite of them, you shall be judged."

Such a reminder is certainly desirable once in a while to all the powerful of the earth, especially to those continuously the object of adulation and worship. Disraeli, one of the shrewdest politicians of any time, suggested that the key to successful dealings with those in superior positions was to "lay it on with a trowel." Most of those who approach Mr. Nehru have the same working maxim, and not a few have found to their delight that it is extremely effective, especially when to the mixture is added a little subtlety. There is no greater cause of wrong decision in high affairs than the tendency of important subordinates to tell their chief what he would like to hear rather than what on merits he should hear. It is not possible to know exactly what proportion of the erroneous policies followed in this matter was due to the prompting of this tendency, but that it must have been a potent factor there can be no doubt.

Mr. Nehru could scarcely have gone through the convolutions he did, had he at all stages received from the lieutenants he trusted information and advice that accorded with the facts. The States Reorganisation Commission had recommended a joint State bringing together all the Gujarati districts and all the Marathi districts except the eight in Madhya Pradesh. The arguments adduced by the Commission for this omission were extremely disingenuous. It was clear that the Commission did not want the Marathi-speaking people in the new Bombay State to have a real majority, and had therefore endeavoured to create a separate small Vidarbha. The proper course then for any one wishing to have a joint State was to modify the Commission's recommendation in this respect. Announced side by side with, or even a little later than, the publication of the Commission's report, such a decision would have been accepted. There would have been some grumbling from the protagonists of linguistic Maharashtra and Gujarat, but nothing would have happened beyond grumbling. The Maharashtrians would have been convinced of the *bona fides* of the Central Government. The Gujaratis would have thought it not a high price to pay for not having Bombay City in another State.

After much havering, the decision has been this, the same that could have been taken at the very beginning. The havering has however cost the country dear, several serious riots, many lives lost, confidence in Government impaired, especially among the young, grave economic damage to Government, local authorities and wage-earners, such bitterness of feeling between the communities as will not die out quickly, the resignation of one of the best Finance Ministers this country is ever likely to have, a man respected alike abroad and at home for integrity and ability.

Once again, when the idea of the joint State was given up and the linguistic States proposal held the field, there was an excellent opportunity for a quiet settlement. Bombay City, a pinpoint on the coast of Maharashtra, could have been left in that province. The Maharashtrians would have been extremely contented. Many Gujaratis would have grumbled a little, but that would have been all. No riots, bloodshed, firing would having occurred. Once again the situation was grossly mishandled. Bombay City, it was declared, must be a third State. Despite this somewhat arbitrary decision, there still remained an opportunity for a peaceful solution. The City could have been permitted to govern itself, given an elected legislature with powers to decide, perhaps after two years, whether it wished to remain a separate State or join Maharashtra. The opportunity was lost. Direct Central administration was insisted upon. Ill-will, disunity and violence prevailed. Mr. Deshmukh felt called upon to resign. A heated debate followed. A grave enough situation seemed about to become even graver.

Non-official opinion was finally able to make itself felt. At its strong urging, the combined State with Vidarbha was at last accepted, the Government presumably not knowing what else it could do. There was however little attempt to explain this decision. Many Gujaratis, who had been counting on a separate State, felt greatly distressed. Their sorrow turned to anger, when instead of immediate, detailed, sympathetic explanations by men high in the Central and State Governments, they were told to regard it as a patriotic duty not to demur to whatever was decided. Riots, caused by bitterness and creating further bitterness, swept through the city of Ahmedabad. Order has now been restored and is being maintained. Yet that there should be heart-burning is inevitable.

By the end of this series of happenings, any Government less firmly based than the present would have been compelled to resign. Even the present Government has been seriously discredited. Were there a party in opposition, powerful enough to present a real threat to it, its days would have been numbered. In the circumstances, is it not understandable, even though sad, that the students of Ahmedabad should not wish to have Mr. Nehru address them ?

IF ONLY.................

26-1-1957

Were our Ministers contrite of heart and humble of mind, the last Cabinet meeting before Republic Day might begin somewhat like this.

The Prime Minister addressing his colleagues: " At the end of the year, the ancients wisely required men to recollect their errors and sins during the preceding twelve months, to reflect upon them and to repent of them. That is not included in our agenda to-day, but let us take it up as the first item, even though it may consume a good deal of time. Well, what do you say ? "

An approving murmur having arisen from all rouud the table despite the amazed look on the faces of several Ministers, the Prime Minister leant back in his chair, and gazing meditatively at the ceiling, said, " How prone we are to err, and with the best of intentions, too! That States Reorganisation muddle! If someone had told me, Pantji and Maulana Saheb, that you and I, with the assistance of Morarji here, could have made such a mess, I would never have believed it. I see it all now, of course.

If we didn't want Bombay to go to Maharashtra—and really even now I am not quite sure why we didn't—the obvious thing was to join Vidarbha to the composite Bombay province. But we never concentrated on the problem sufficiently. Listening to too many people and thinking too little of consequences, immediate and future—that was our trouble.

And, of course, that man Panikker, with his plausible arguments and impressive ways. (I have made him Ambassador again, too. In Paris, of all places! I do hope it will turn out alright and I won't have to be sorry.) When I think of all that happened, the many riots and police firings, the bitterness of heart and frustration of spirit, I do feel we sinned. Mea Culpa! May we be forgiven!"

Pant: "It was an error, a grievous error. But I would say, don't forget how others misled us. Those Congress Maharashtrians with their Bombay Minister-leaders, nay, even good Morarji here, their appreciations were always so far away from what actually happened.

Sorry as I am about it all, perhaps I am even more sorry about the later Ahmedabad incidents. How easily those could have been averted if we had only used a little imagination. Alas, our thought-ways seem to have become even more wooden than those of the wooden bureaucracy we so often decried. And the whole episode was avoidable, so easily avoidable. That is the real tragedy!"

Azad: "A bad business, certainly, and I would not play down our responsibility. One very sad feature, of course, was that because of it, we lost Deshmukh. I know some of you thought him difficult. Yet how we miss his stability and dignity. There was an internal integrity about that man I liked immensely."

Morarji: "Personally, I am not too enthusiastic about him. On this unusal occasion though, I feel I must join you in admitting that we made very bad mistakes. Ordinarily, of course, I am unaccustomed to concede that I can be wrong. Should we not at least have accepted the very reasonable requests for judicial enquiry into the various firings? I set my face against them, but I am not sure now, not at all sure, I was right."

The Prime Minister: "How much truth is there, do you think, in the feeling people have that power has corrupted us? A great deal probably. I know I do many things now that would have seemed dreadful to me before. Take this Preventive Detention Act we insist on maintaining. Why even that diehard, Churchill, would be shocked by it. I remember how in the middle of the war, when Morrison wanted to release Mosely, the leader of the Fascists, from detention under some section of the Defence of Realm Act they had, Churchill supported him strongly. I had the passage copied out the other day. This is what he said:

'The power of the Executive to cast a man into prison without formulating any charge known to the law and particularly to deny him judgment by his peers for an indefinite period, is in the highest degree odious, and is the foundation of all totalitarian Governments, whether Nazi or Communist. It is only when extreme danger to the State can be pleaded, that this power may be temporarily assumed by the Executive. And even so, its working must be interpreted with the utmost vigilance by a free Parliament. Extraordinary powers assumed by the Executive with the consent of Parliament in emergency should be yielded up when and as the emergency declines. Nothing can be more abhorrent to democracy than to imprison a person or keep him in prison because he is unpopular. This is really the test of civilisation.'

"Can we say there is an emergency now? Do we not perhaps in any case interpret emergency too liberally? And how many people do we hold in jail without trial? A few thousand at least? There is also always Abdulla, poor fellow."

Krishnamachari: "Power has of course made us different. It is natural. We look at things from on high now. I always had a bitter tongue and hardly ever minded hurting peoples' feelings, but now I positively delight in being severe and saying cutting things. Still this detention is undoubtedly very wrong. Why can't we do away with it?"

Jagjivan Ram: "There are always so many objections from colleagues. Public peace, law and order, tranquillity, interference in elections, what can one do? How simple the 'locking up' solution! But this isn't the only corruption. Think of all the money we spend on shows, feasts, parties, illumination, entertainments. And all for what? Our greater glory. No permanent advantage to the people."

Katju: "Perfectly true. Apart from anything else, it offends my lawyer's sense of logic. Here we go on passing resolutions urging upon the people austerity and saving, and at the same time waste ourselves, and make other people waste, any amount of money. Take Republic Day. I hear institutions and individuals are being actually asked by Governments to have fine displays of illumination. How many crores will go down the drain throughout the country? Have we no better use for money? If all that is needed are shows, the Defence Forces have plenty of bands and we could march troops picturesquely up and down to music in all the big centres. That would not cost anything, or very little in any case. But we must be ostentatious. Why do we do it? Why?

Prime Minister: "Yes, I know. It is all quite wrong. Some old Gandhians whom I respect have talked to me more than once about the need for simple living in high places if our appeals and plans are to be effective. And when they do, I quite agree. But somehow things just go on as before. We have none of us the heart to face up to inconveniences probably."

Nanda: "It isn't only inconveniences, Sir, it is a real liking for luxury that we've fallen prey to. Think of the Congress at Indore. The lordly mansions we were put up in, and all the tremendous tamasha. What expenditure! By whom! And for what! These shows don't even attract popular sympathy anymore. We've fallen into bad ways, and it is difficult to give them up."

Khandubhai: "Injustice and oppression don't seem to mean the same thing to us that they did. Take this suffering in Hungary. How wrong we were not to oppose it wholeheartedly from the beginning! And we don't seem to have learnt our lesson yet. Even on the last U. N. vote to appoint a committee to obtain information from refugees since it is certain that the Soviet-sponsored Hungarian Government won't let in Hammarskjoeld or his men, our Krishna Menon abstained, though Burma and Ceylon voted for, and Ceylon is actually serving on the Committee. Why do we behave in this way? We are just aligning ourselves with the oppressive Soviet Communists."

Prime Minister: "Yes, I am afraid it does look rather like that. There is far too much Communist coming and going too, nowadays. Here's Chou-En-Lai, coming for the fourth time, and Zhukov. Heaven knows how many others are just queueing up to unload themselves on us. I am really beginning to feel quite uneasy. But somehow one doesn't like to be definite. Oh, well, we have talked for quite a time now and we have certainly recollected some of our errors and reflected on them. Perhaps we have even repented. But real repentance means action. We must see that it comes. Will it, though, will it?"

A STRONGER KERALA?

16-5-1957

If the reports from Delhi are true that despite the results of the last general elections and of the recent municipal elections in Bombay City, the Congress Party and the Government of India are not prepared to consider afresh the question of the partition of Bombay State and have firmly determined that it must retain its present form, even devoted admirers will not be able to deny a striking resemblance between these bodies and the Bourbons. Like that unfortunate royal house, they will feel compelled to agree, these organisations too learn nothing and forget nothing.

The events of the years since the publication of the States Reorganisation Commission's Report would seem to have been drastic enough to carry even to somewhat insensitive intelligences the lesson that in matters so profoundly affecting the people as the formation of States, what they do not want, they will not have. Yet the Congress Party and the Government of India persist, we are told, in maintaining unaltered the composite Bombay State, and in arguing, just as they did in case after case during the last two years, that the people really cannot want anything different from what they want, and that if it appears that do, this is probably either a mistake for which they ought not to be allowed to suffer or a temporary aberration from which given due time and care, they are bound to recover. Doubt is also thrown upon the evidence, and the conclusions that naturally follow from it are hotly disputed.

During the last general elections, almost all the seats from the Marathi speaking area of the old Bombay State were won by the Samiti, an organisation that stands for a separate Maharashtra with Bombay City in it. The Samiti also won some seats in Vidarbha and Marathwada, where it had not entered upon a full scale election campaign. In Bombay City, the Congress's ancient and well-fortified stronghold, it scored quite reasonably, securing 11 out of 24 seats. It can thus be concluded that as a whole the people of the entire Marathi speaking area are undoubtedly for the separate State. As if this was not enough, in the elections to the Bombay Municipal Corporation, the Samiti won again, getting 71 seats out of 131. The particular issue of the linguistic State and of Bombay City's inclusion in it had been very prominent in the election, being the common tie among the Samiti candidates that held the organisation together. The Bombay City electorate demonstrated that it was for a separate Maharashtra including Bombay City.

The demand for a separate Gujarat State has not shown itself with quite the same intensity throughout all the Gujarati-speaking areas. Yet the Mahagujarat Parishad won significant successes in the last general elections and there can be no doubt that the appeal of a separate Gujarat State to many, especially the young, is great. Even the extremely popular Mr. Nehru was unable to get a hearing from a college audience in Ahmedabad after his Government had rescinded the proposal for the separate Gujarat State. So fully indeed was the Congress Party aware of the deep feeling against it, that in spite of its long established sway over Ahmedabad City, it did not even dare to put up candidates directly in the recent Municipal elections. The majority of the Gujaratis would certainly welcome a unilingual Gujarat Province if it came and would in any case prefer it to a composite State in which they were linked willy-nilly with a most unwilling Maharashtra.

When these are the facts, why do the Congress leaders refuse to take appropriate action? Psychological hesitations probably furnish one part of the answer, and considerations of expediency the other. Despite all that has happened and all the linguistic States they themselves have brought into being in recent years, there still seems settled in the minds of some of the most prominent Congressmen the belief that there is something fundamentally wrong about the fixing of State boundaries on the basis of language, It somehow detracts from the ideal of national unity. That people should feel strongly on such an issue they hold to be unworthy and their appeal in this matter always is to curb prejudice, to refuse to give the part precedence over the whole, to think Indian.

Now this a very erroneous conception. It seems to be based on the idea that the mind of man has room for only one loyalty. Either linguistic State, Maharashtra or Gujarat, or the nation, India, must fill it. Loyalty to both cannot exist and there must be a choice. This is obviously wrong. If it were not, the only true Indians would be those residents of the present Bombay State who are whole-heartedly for the maintenance of its bi-lingual character, since the whole of India—outside this State—is now divided into linguistic States. Is it really to be concluded that the Andhra, Tamil, Bengali, or Assamese is less patriotic than the bi-lingual Bombay resident? In reality, of course, there is no conflict between loyalty to the State and loyalty to the country. The first lies within and is contained in the scope of the second. Indeed it has been found, not only in this country but in others, that without the first often the second is missing, the feeling for the bigger unit resting in many men's imagination in the mind's eye picture of the smaller, more familiar area.

The expediency argument runs somewhat as follows: After all, it was only last year the composite state was decided on. Whatever the voting in the Maharashtra area, the Congress has a good majority in the State legislature. It has been able to form a Government. There is no inherent organic unity in the Samiti. It consists of various parties. Let the new Government have its chance. Good administration may alter people's feelings and able political play may break up the unity of the Samiti. The next election is five years away and in five years a great deal can happen to make policy succeed. This line of argument is as fallacious as it is plausible. There might have been something in it if the people did not on the whole feel so deeply on this issue.

That feeling will be the animating force behind the Samiti so that it is more than likely that enforced delay in the attainment of its object will increase rather than decrease its cohesion. The Maharashtrian members of the Government can also scarcely act with confidence, since they cannot help feeling all the time that they lack the support of their own people. Even among the Congress Maharashtrian members of the Assembly, there are probably not a few who share fully the aim and purpose of the Samiti. The chances then of delay bringing plenty, in the sense of a reduction of power of the opposition, can be regarded as slender.

In problems of this kind, moreover, the legislative approach may lead on to the agitational. Once this happens only those thrice armed in self-confidence and cruelty can venture to predict its limits. Accordingly the counsel of short-term expediency coincides with that of long-term wisdom. Settle this matter promptly in accordance with the principle already accepted in other parts of the country. There has been enough bitterness over it. Do not add to it, but rather lessen its memory as far as possible by prompt and right action. In the words used when writing in 1952 about the linguistic problem in general and that of the Andhra State in particular.

> What thou must needs do, do betimes,
> Steep thy necessary acts in graciousness.

The Congress has in truth a very special reason for following the course recommended. One of the principal constituents of the Samiti is the Communist Party, well-known for its expertise in exploitation to its own profit of situations that have their origin in grievances. The longer the postponement and back sliding about this problem, the greater the likelihood of the growth of the Communist Party's power within the Samiti, and perhaps even of the Samiti's total absorption by it. The earlier and more forthcoming the proper settlement, the less the probability of the strengthening of the Communists, and even of the continuance of the Samiti, which came together only for this purpose. If, in fact, the Congress wishes to rehabilitate itself in Maharashtra, partition alone can give it a chance. That act, like mercy, will bless not only those who take but also those who give. Without it, there is a very fair likelihood that the next elections may make of Maharashtra a stronger Kerala. Can the prospect be faced with equanimity ?

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